

In the Claims:

The following listing reflects amendments to the claims and replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in this application.

1-17. (Cancelled)

18. (Currently amended) A method for screening chemical compounds for ability to bind to the region of HCV responsible for binding to a host cell, comprising measuring the binding of a chemical compound to be screened to a protein ~~according to any one of claims 1 to 3~~ having a molecular weight of about 24kd and which binds to the E2 protein of hepatitis C virus, or a functionally equivalent variant or fragment thereof.

19-20. (Cancelled)

21. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein the protein or functionally equivalent variant or fragment thereof is functionally unglycosylated.

22. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein the protein or functionally equivalent variant or fragment thereof is a transmembrane protein.

23. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the protein or functionally equivalent variant or fragment thereof is a transmembrane protein.